

In theaters

“The Legend of Hercules”



By Macario Mora



My expectations for “The Legend of Hercules” was lower than any film screening I’ve been to in years, with of course the exception of the final “Twilight” debacle, and not surprisingly those expectations were pretty much spot on. When a film’s lead (Kellan Lutz) was the sixth most important actor in the Twilight series you know you’re in for a real winner. Don’t believe me? Check out Rotten Tomatoes and the film’s venerable 4-percent favorability rating – a solid 34 percent lower than the fifth iteration of the “Paranormal Activity” franchise.

The first of two films about the legendary Greek hero to appear on the big screen this year is supposed to be an origin tale, but outside of Hercules’ conception it doesn’t really touch on any of the aspects that have made the half-god a hero for millennia such as his famous “Twelve Labours.”

It feels like the film was rushed into theaters in an attempt to take away some of the thunder from the more highly anticipated “Hercules: The Thracian Wars” starring

Dwayne Johnson coming out this summer. The effort has worked in the past with two similar films appearing in the same year – think “Olympus has Fallen,” and “White House Down,” but my crystal ball doesn’t foresee the same fate for movie numero dos.

In this film, the son of Zeus is betrayed by his father King Amphitryon (Scott Adkins) who sends him to Egypt to die. The King knows Hercules isn’t his real son and wants to prevent him from defiling Hebe (Gaia Weiss) the princess of Crete who is being married off to Iphicles (Liam Garrigan), Hercules’ older, cowardly brother. But, after being ambushed by Egyptian mercenaries, Hercules and Sotiris (Liam McIntyre) survive a full-on slaughter and are sold into slavery.

At this point Hercules is in his 20s, and still hasn’t discovered his strength, but he’s able along with Sotiris to fight his way back to Greece by participating in gladiatorial events in shady, ancient dive bars. Eventually, he wins his freedom and begins to amass a following of farmers and unhappy legionnaires who are fed up with the tyrant king and his sissy heir. Finally, while watching his friends being slaughtered, Hercules discovers his strength while chained to some giant pillars. Apparently, he had to accept Jesus or Zeus, whatever, into his life before he was able to obtain his superhuman strength – dumb.

Somehow, however, as he and his band of dysfunctional misfits make their way to the palace to challenge the king, Hercules gains additional help from Zeus while simultaneously losing his power in a ridiculous final battle with the king. You’d assume he’d keep his strength, but that would only make sense.

This film is pretty awful. The acting is ridiculous, and it’s unbearably boring for an action movie. It’s an absurd mishmash of a poor man’s “Gladiator” and “300.” Furthermore, it doesn’t follow the Greek myth or any of the many iterations through the years, making it a film about the son of Zeus in name only. However, if you’re into a bunch of men running around shirtless in their underwear then you might be entertained for a minute, but what this film really needed was an R rating. A little blood and guts along with steamier romantic sequences might have raised the film a half a star, but ultimately it fits right where it should in the abyss of January film releases that only the loneliest of film reviewers might happen upon.

This film is rated PG-13 for sequences of intense combat action and violence, and for some sensuality.